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CEREBUS

JAKA'S STORY 5

118
JAN

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

WALKING ON THE MOON

postscript

"The Earth reminded us of a Christmas tree ornament hanging in the blackness of space. As we got farther and farther away it diminished in size. Finally it shrank to the size of a marble, the most beautiful marble you can imagine. That beautiful, warm living object looked so fragile, so delicate, *that if you touched it with a finger it would crumble and fall apart.*"

Astronaut James Irwin
(italics mine)

CEREBUS

NO. 118 JANUARY 1989

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

JOYCE HARRISON
Interim Administrator

Circulation
26,500

JAKA'S STORY
a novel

•

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 114)

•

POGROM'S PROGRESS
(Cerebus 115 to Cerebus 119)

•

THE POET
(Cerebus 120 to Cerebus 130)

•

MYSTERY ACHIEVEMENT
(Cerebus 131 to Cerebus 136)

•

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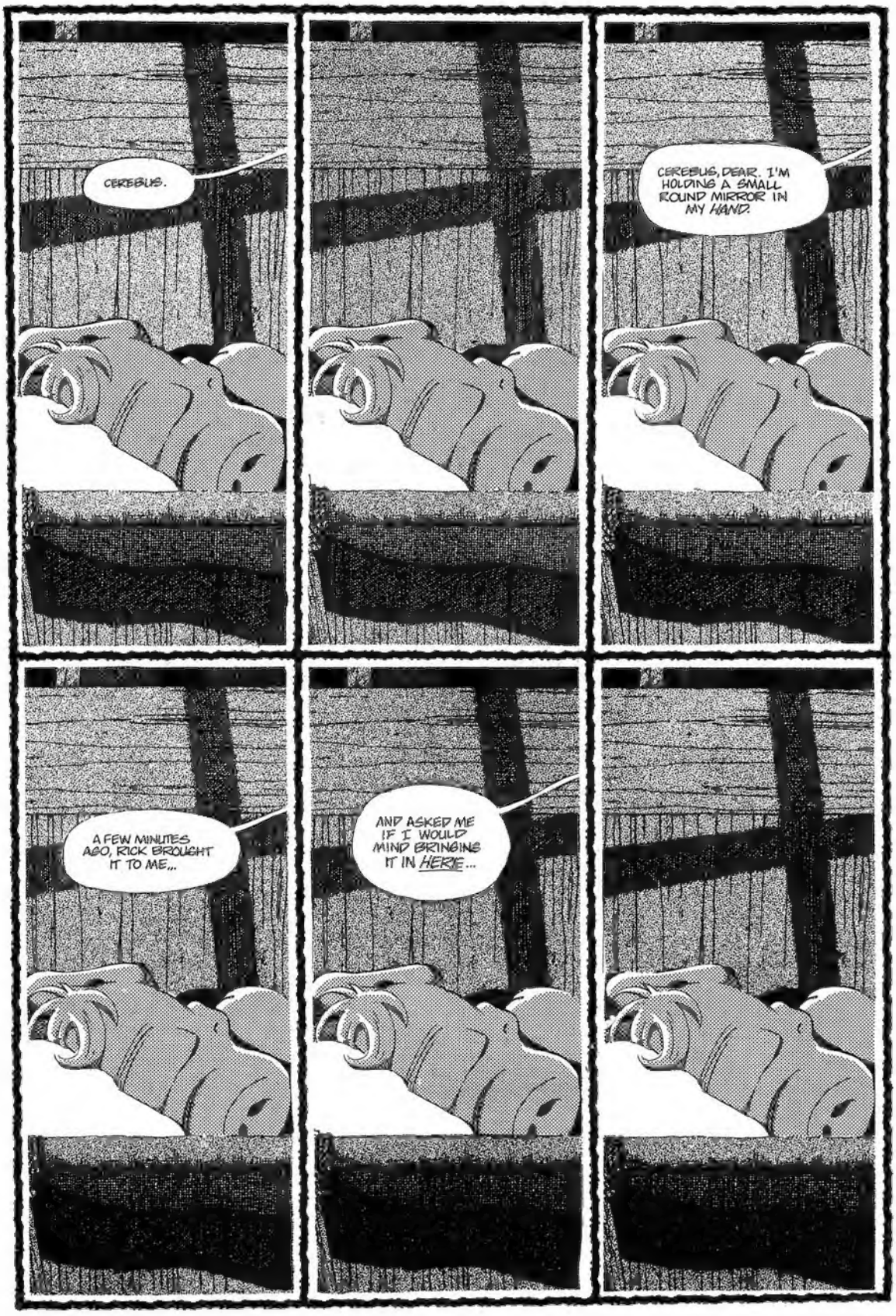
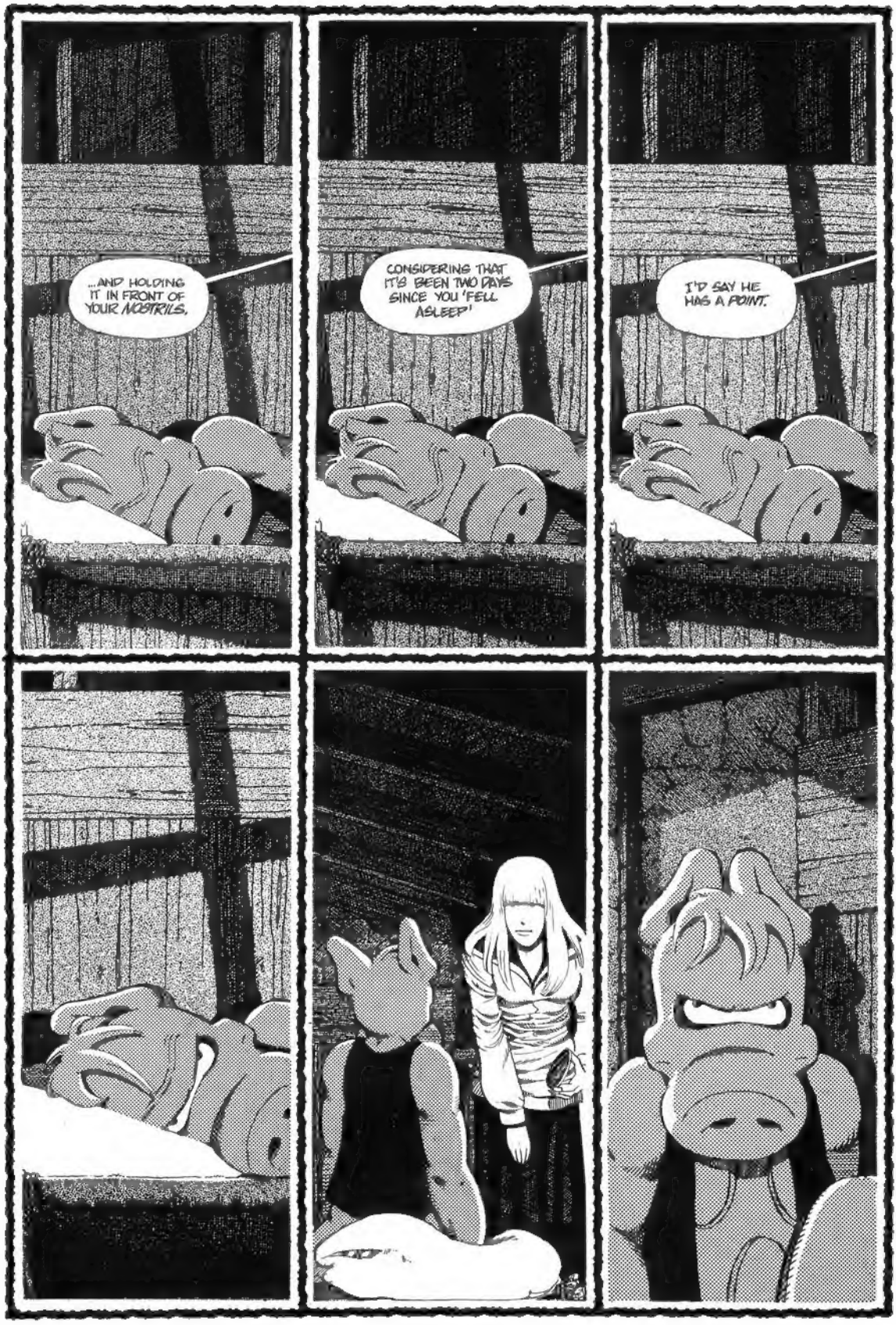
ON THE FIFTH full day of her ordeal, vestigal traces of Jaka's awareness bade themselves return; fragmented and confused in a mind both slumbering and awake. The room seemed tinted with colours unfamiliar to her. Her brow radiated a warmth from beneath the light cotton of her bandage (which, borne on rivulets of perspiration, threatened any moment to descend from her forehead and obscure what dim and foggy sight remained to the child). Her eyes, too-bright with fever, betrayed the strain of maintaining their perception of her surroundings.

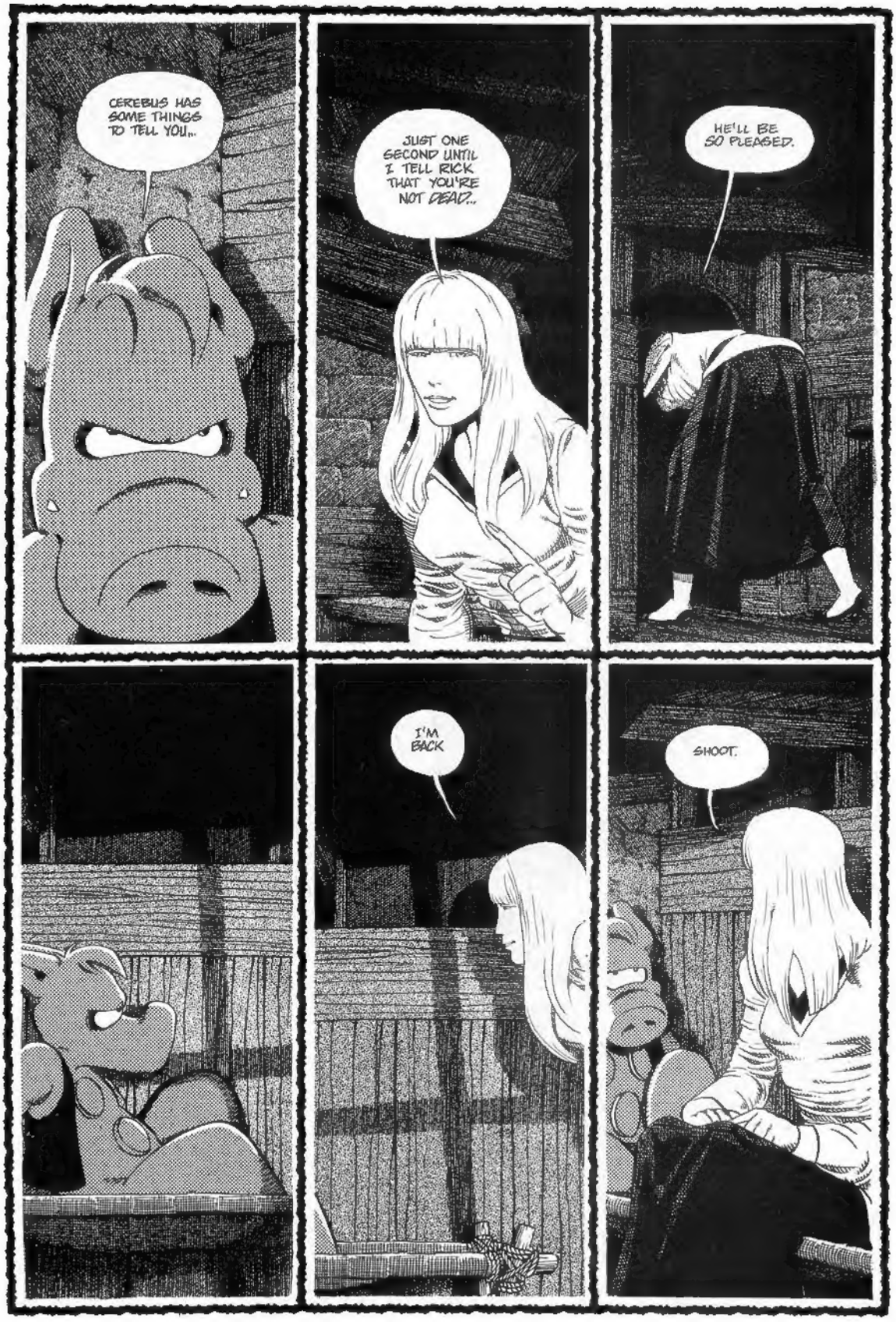
There was besides only the laboured sound of her own breathing, loud and unnatural in her ears.

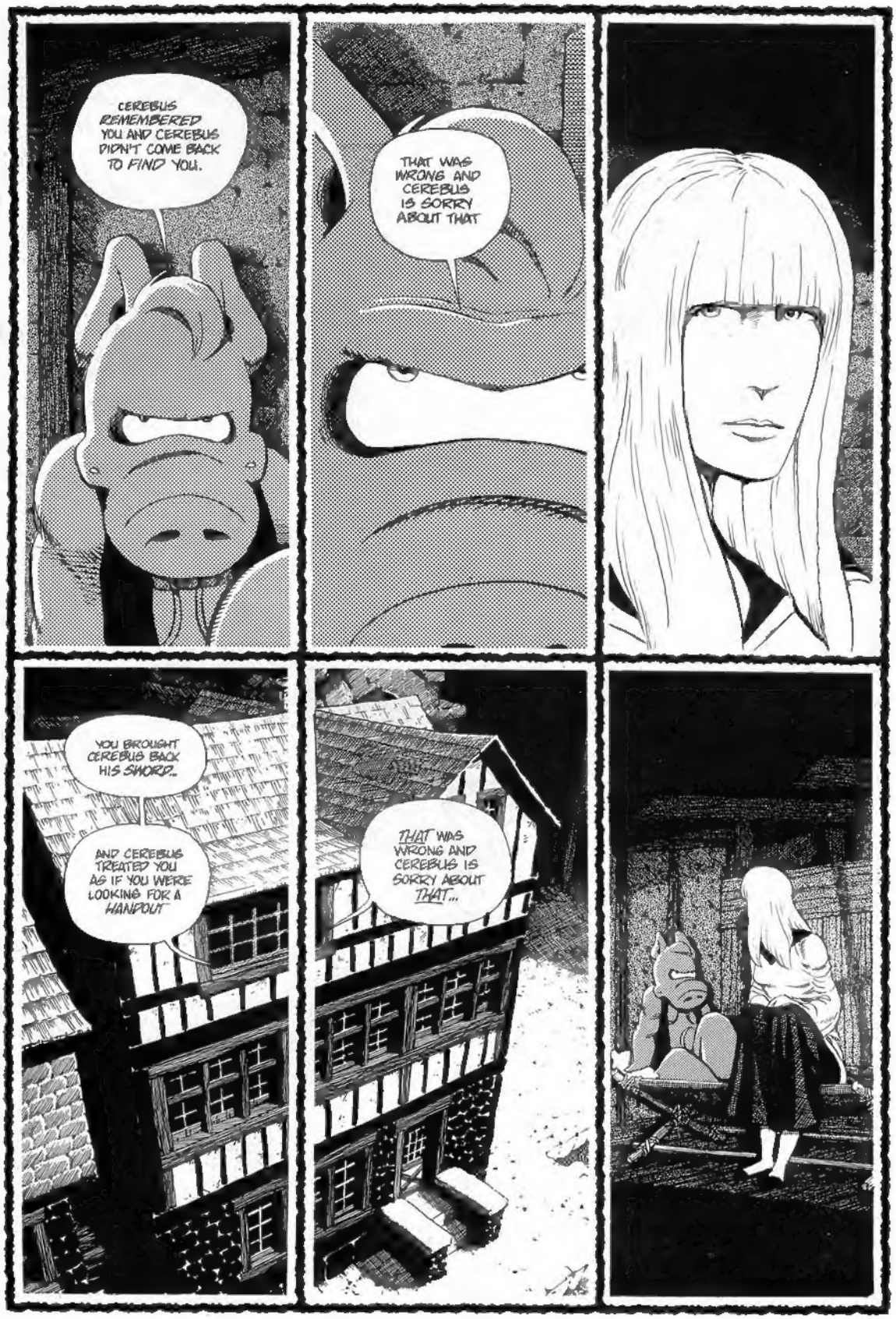
MORNING, MISSUS
MORNING, MR. WITHERS
I'M AFRAID I OWE YOU A VERY BIG APOLOGY.
WHY... WHATEVER FOR, MISSUS?
FOR LEAVING YESTERDAY WITHOUT THANKING YOU FOR THE LOVELY APPLES YOU HAD FOR US.
IT WAS VERY
THOUGHTLESS OF ME
NOT AT ALL, MISSUS. NOT AT ALL.
PLEASE.
THINK NOTHING OF IT.

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY, ISN'T IT, MR. WITHERS?
IT IS INDEED, MISSUS. IT IS *INDEED*.
A BEAUTIFUL DAY.
AND YOU, MR. WITHERS?
HOW ARE YOU TODAY?
FINE AND FIT, MISSUS, FIT AND FINE...
AS I CAN PLAINLY SEE. YOU'RE A FINE AND FIT SPECIMEN MR. WITHERS.
THANK YOU, MISSUS, I DO MY BEST.


CEREBUS.
CEREBUS, DEAR. I'M HOLDING A SMALL ROUND MIRROR IN MY HAND.
A FEW MINUTES AGO, RICK BROUGHT IT TO ME...
AND ASKED ME IF I WOULD MIND BRINGING IT IN HERE...


...AND HOLDING IT IN FRONT OF YOUR NOSTRILS.
CONSIDERING THAT IT'S BEEN TWO DAYS SINCE YOU 'FELL ASLEEP'
I'D SAY HE HAS A POINT.


CEREBUS HAS SOME THINGS TO TELL YOU...
JUST ONE SECOND UNTIL I TELL RICK THAT YOU'RE NOT DEAD...
HE'LL BE SO PLEASED.
I'M BACK
SHOOT.


CEREBUS REMEMBERED YOU AND CEREBUS DIDN'T COME BACK TO FIND YOU.
THAT WAS WRONG AND CEREBUS IS SORRY ABOUT THAT
YOU BROUGHT CEREBUS BACK HIS SWORD...
AND CEREBUS TREATED YOU AS IF YOU WERE LOOKING FOR A HANDOUT
THAT WAS WRONG AND CEREBUS IS SORRY ABOUT THAT...

YOU TRIED TO PERSUADE CEREBUS TO LEAVE HIS POST IN A TIME OF WAR
THAT WAS WRONG ...
SO CEREBUS ISN'T SORRY HE STAYED AT HIS POST.
BUT CEREBUS HIT YOU WHEN YOU WERE ONLY TRYING TO SAVE HIM...
THAT WAS WRONG
SO CEREBUS IS SORRY ABOUT THAT.

CEREBUS TRIED TO GET YOU TO LEAVE WITH HIM WHEN YOU WERE PREGNANT WITH SOMEONE ELSE'S BABY...
THAT WAS WRONG
HERE WITHOUT

MR. WITHERS ASKED ME TO GIVE THIS BACK TO YOU.
THERE'S SOME KIND OF INDENTURE LAW OR SOMETHING IN TEST, HE SAID..
..NOW THAT THE PRICE OF GOLD HAS GONE THROUGH THE ROOF
HE'D HAVE TO PAY YOU HUGE AMOUNTS IN INTEREST ..MAKE YOU A CO-OWNER OF HIS HOLDINGS
HE IS WILLING TO LET YOU STAY HERE N THE APARTMENT WITH US
I ASKED HIM LAST NIGHT
RICK AND I WILL SHARE OUR FOOD WITH YOU, OF COURSE
AS LONG AS YOU DON'T OVER-DO IT, YOU CAN HAVE AN OCCASIONAL ALE IN THE PUB

I LOVE MY HUSBAND
...
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO PUT IT ANY MORE *PLAINLY* THAN *THAT.*
I *CARE* ABOUT YOU... AND I KNOW HOW *DANGEROUS* THE CITY HAS BECOME...
HOW DANGEROUS FOR *YOU* ESPECIALLY

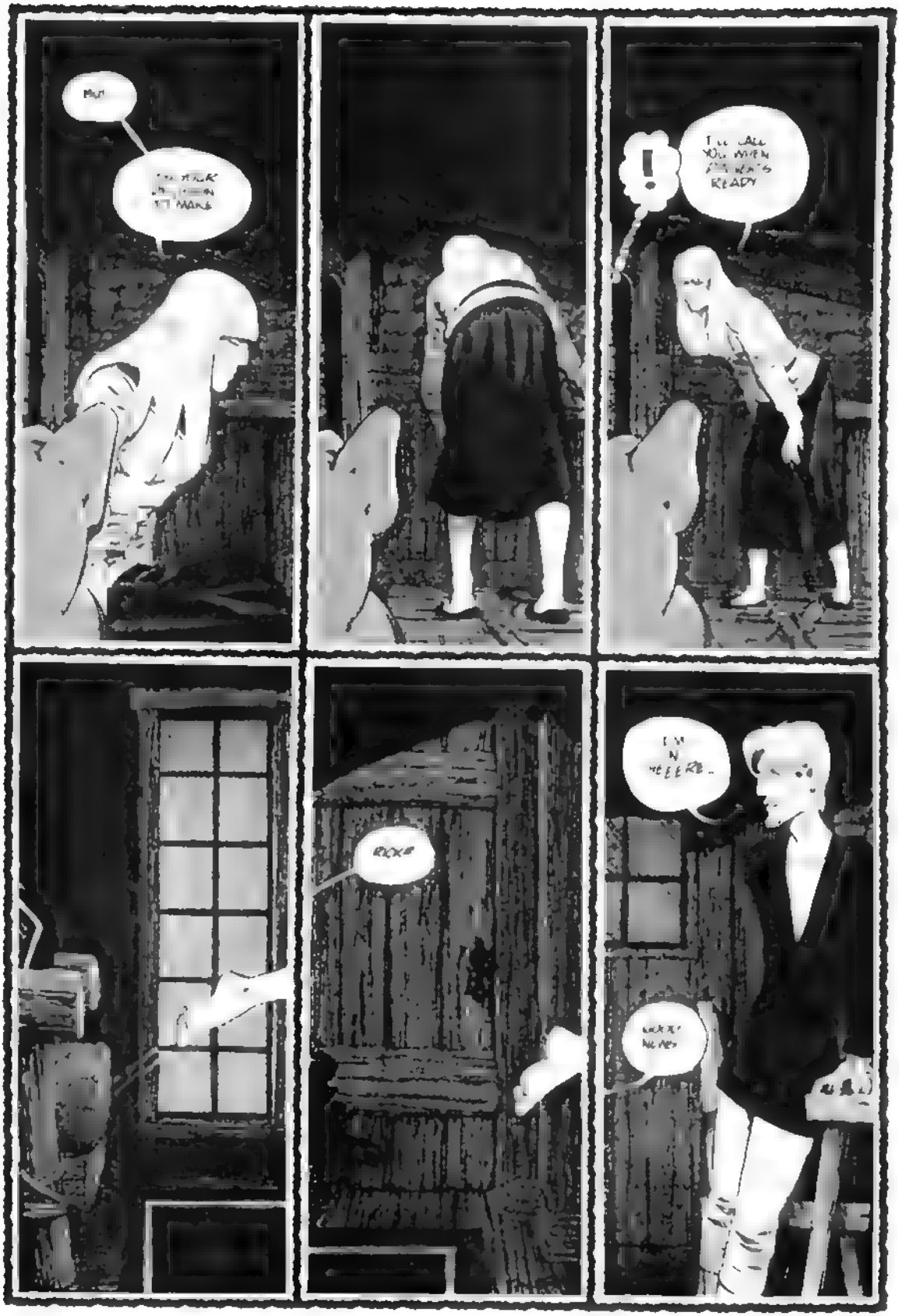
IF YOU STAY WITH
THAT...
I
LOVE YOU.
WHEN YOU
WERE TALKING
"
JUST
NOW
"
I
REMEMBERED
EACH TIME
...AND HOW I
FELT.
SEEING
YOU

I WAS NEVER AFRAID WHEN I WAS YOUNGER
NOT AFTER I LEFT PALNU, ANYWAY
I CAME HERE.... TO TEST....BECAUSE IT'S THE BIGGEST CITY IN THE WORLD
BECAUSE IT WAS BIGGER THAN PALNU...
WHEN I THINK OF THE BARS... THE NEIGHBOURHOODS I DANCED IN
THIRTEEN YEARS OLD FOURTEEN YEARS OLD
THEY SAY TARIM LOOKS AFTER FOOLS AND SMALL CHILDREN
IT MUST BE TRUE
BECAUSE I WAS BOTH.
AND NOTHING BAD EVER HAPPENED TO ME

THEN.
WHEN YOU BECAME PRIME MINISTER
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE THE SAME AS UNCLE JULIUS
YOU'D HAVE GUARDS AROUND YOU, SOLDIERS. NO MATTER WHAT IT DID TO YOU AS A PERSON..
..BEING PRIME MINISTER...
YOU'D BE SAFE.
WHEN IT ALL STARTED FALLING APART-- WHEN I STARTED HEARING HOW BAD IT WAS... HOW BAD IT WAS GOING TO GET.
I WAS AFRAID.
REALLY AFRAID

FOR THE FIRST TIME IT SEEMED THAT NOTHING WAS SAFE
I FELT AS IF AT ANY MOMENT.. THE WORLD COULD SWALLOW UP EVERYONE...
...EVERYTHING...
I CARED ABOUT
AND WHEN YOU WOULDN'T COME WITH ME..
IT FELT LIKE THE WORLD DID SWALLOW EVERYTHING UP
EVER SINCE THEN I'VE BEEN AFRAID.
MORNING, NOON AND NIGHT
IF IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU, IT COULD HAPPEN TO UNCLE JULIUS IF IT COULD HAPPEN TO UNCLE JULIUS, IT COULD HAPPEN TO...
ANYONE

I DON'T KNOW
WHAT I'M SAYING
YOU DON'T FRIGHTEN ME
BUT IT'S BECAUSE OF YOU THAT I'M ALWAYS AFRAID
HAVING SAID ALL THAT, I'M HOPING YOU'LL STAY... I'LL FEEL BETTER KNOWING YOU'RE SOMEWHERE SAFE
RICK WANTS YOU TO STAY AS WELL.


!
I'll CALL YOU WHEN SHE'S READY
KNOCK

I THINK HE'S GOING TO STAY
KISS
GREAT
GREAT GREAT GREAT

DAVE SIM
HIGH
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AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave,

Rereading **Church & State** again (that's redundant, isn't it?), for the second time since you finished it — I just put down #84, the issue where you ask us to "write soon and let (you) know how (I'm) getting on." Well, it's 3-1/2 years later, and I'm getting on better now than I was then. I graduated from Bord (Claremont's alma Mater) and got a dead-end job far below my capabilities, in part because I am not interested in a suit-and-tie desk job and in part because I was a thoroughly unmotivated dope fiend when I graduated. But you know Dave - when High Society was coming out, I read each new issue twice when I bought it - once straight, then stoned. Well, when I was stoned I was able to see beneath the surface of the story that month. I was more able to make the subtle connections that were woven like tiny threads from issue to issue. Am I the first to tell you that? Anyway, that's one thing I miss about grass . . . I find it harder to intuitively grasp the implications about what goes on off-panel in the book. But I'm working on it. You know, I think the reason I trust you as much as I do, as far as the consistency of the story-line and of Estarcion as a whole, is because of my former X-ray vision. This is **not** a slap-dash job (no shit, Sherlock). In fact, I may never have gotten into Cerebus if I never got into drugs. I regret neither, but one has fallen by the wayside while the other continues to provide hours of distraction from the shit I should be paying attention to, like mathematics (my own life's passion). Y'see, the first issue I ever came across was Mind Game II, at a party in 1982. I was on pot, amphetamines, and beer . . . lots of each . . . and even though I had no idea what the little anthropomorphic critter and the disembodied voice were talking about, I knew it was right up my alley. Intelligent and mind-bending at the same time. At the time my idea of the pinnacle of the genre was Starlin's **Captain Marvel** and **Warlock** issues, so you can see where my head was at.

Well, I seem to have lost my direction. As you can see, I've renounced my Nasty Habits, at least for now. I realize part of that last paragraph, if I may take the liberty of dignifying it with such a term, may seem insulting, about getting into Cerebus on drugs, but I'm inclined to believe you won't take it that way. I was intending to say something about your own editorial comments in issue # whatever, about "everybody's smoking, no one's getting high", and follow it up with some snide remarks about people who get off the shit and then treat staying straight the same way I used to treat staying stoned, an obsession to which everything else takes a back seat, but then it seemed to be self-congratulatory wanking. Besides, who am I to knock what works for folks, just because it's not my style? Maybe I should say something about Cerebus . . .

I'm really looking forward to Jaka's Story. I must say I really don't know what to expect, except that I imagine we'll be seeing some behavior from the Earth-pig that most of us will consider "out of character" or . . . shit. I had the perfect word in mind just a second ago . . . anyway, they do make little boys out of us, don't they? (Thanks to Stuart, who no longer buys the book, for that observation upon reading the last part of Odd Transformations Part II). (A plagiarist I'm not . . .). There's a certain mood that hits me when the only thing to do is to read "Acquired Tastes" — "Terrible Analogies" and listen to Genesis' . . . **and then there were three** . . . album. And that's blue, man. That's the sort of tone I'm expecting. Not that that mood hits me real often, but when it does, it's nice to have something sympathetic to absorb.

On the retail front - I can't remember if I wrote you about this or not, but for some reason my anal-retentive ex-dealer took the dispute between you and Diamond personally and stopped carrying Cerebus. It cost him my business, which sucks a lot more for me than for him, since I buy maybe $40 U.S. worth of stuff a month, and now I have to go about 5 miles for my comics instead of 7 blocks. (Plug - have you checked out Matt Howarth's **Keif Llama-Xeno Tech** from Fantagraphics? Primo sci-fi, if yer into Piers Anthony-type aliens and such.) But if I have to go that far for Cerebus, I may as well pick up everything else while I'm there. Last time I was there I was surprised to see you (or your head, anyway) talking about David Byrne from inside a glass-fronted plastic box. Tell me, did Clausius get hold of you? How do you draw with no hands? I met you briefly in '82 in NYC on the American Tour, you were whole then — when did it happen? Anyway, Ralph and Paul at the College of Comic Book Knowledge are sincere and tasteful guys, apparently with an eye for the subversive . . . they were plugging **Itchy Planet**, of all things, which pleased me to no end.

All this and I still haven't told you my impression of **Church & State**. That's because I'm still forming it. My biggest question concerns perhaps the most crucial turning point of the novel, when Powers decides to appoint Cerebus to the Papacy. I'm still undecided as to whether I buy it or not. I mean, on the surface I know why he did it - to throw a wrench in Weisshaupt's plans and to gain support from Iestan "peasants and livestock" for the Western church's domination of Iest's religious hierarchy or whatever. But on the other hand, Cerebus has no theological training, no experience in the priesthood; in fact, how can Powers even be sure that he's a Tarmite? Yes, Powers was desperate. Yes, Cerebus had been cranking out dime store novellas espousing "good orthodox Tarmite thinking", as a condition of his employment (or somebody had, under Cerebus' name, anyway). But both Powers and the Lion of Serrea (are we ever going to find out his name?) must have known that these pamphlets were just Weisshaupt's tactics for distracting the masses.

Shit. Y'don't have a doob, do ya?

I'll get back to you.

Hello to Frank for me.

Your 'til Filgate learns to read,

Tony Dunlop
Minneapolis, MN.

P.S. I love the letters page. It makes me feel like Cerebus Fans make up one huge extended Jewish family. Eat! Y'so skinny!

P.P.S. Just re-finished. Can you believe I forgot the Great Feline kicked the bucket. So who cares what his name was now. Also I picked up #114 yesterday. I think that's the most beautiful cover that's ever been on this book. If I vote in the '88 CBG awards (I probably won't), you've got yourself a backer on that one. I can't believe that you got so little mail on the end of C&S. Maybe, like me, everyone has to read it 10 more times or so, with the benefit of future issues I might add, to "take it all in". Or maybe I'm just slow. Maybe nobody wants to

write in with brilliant conjectures that turn out to be totally false. Oh, who knows. Y'done good If I was here in whatever room you're in right now, well, I'd be able to look at you, unless you were hiding under the table. Keep it up, we love you, for your integrity blah blah . . . yeah. Just so you know you're appreciated. OK?

27,000 people all talking with their mouths full. Oy. I'm sorry, Sean, you was saying?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

While I was brushing my teeth last night, and listening to local election results, the following thought entered my mind.

If you did make some kind of animated Cerebus, be it feature film, NFB short or Saturday morning, would you have Lorenzo Music supply his voice? Just wondering . . .

Sean T. Lavery

George C. Scott. How many times I have to tell you kids, anh? George C. Scott, I been saying since you kids was all (Connie don't do that to your brother, it's not nice) ten years old. George C. Scott. Does anyone listen? Hah. I answer my own question. Ng. Finish that mouthful all the way, now put your fork down . . . no no down . . . that's nice. You wanted to speak. Please. Speak.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Mr. Sim,

I have just read a passage in 'The Magic Mountain' by Thomas Mann, which has proven rather interesting.

Is it a coincidence that your character, Weishaupt, has an historical counterpart? Is he in any way based upon Adam Weishaupt, founder of the Illuminati and former member of the Society of Jesus? Weishaupt's actions would be quite understandable if he were a type of Illuminist.

As an Illuminist, he would have had close ties with whatever form Freemasonry took during Cerebus' era. It is a well known fact that Freemasons of a high degree are steeped in mysticism and have held very influential positions in society. The former fact would explain Weishaupt's extensive knowledge of the Great Ascension. Furthermore, as a type of Jesuit, he would have had close links with the Church, not to mention a strong desire to wrest control of it from the pope. The latter fact would explain his resemblance to Washington, who was a well known Freemason. Were you trying to suggest something here?

In any case, 'Church and State', as a whole, once again showed what could happen to a Church grown too big. This is a fact which even Christians accept or at least should accept. When an organization becomes too big, power becomes primary, and the really important issues become diluted or forgotten. Because of this, the ecumenical movement should be considered a bane to good Christianity. The World Council of Churches recently became a forum for discussing whether the Bible should be desexed, but due to time constraints no resolutions were passed on the all important question of evangelism. Do not divide the brethren, some will say. But what kind of brothers are being taken into the fold indiscriminately?

However, it should not be forgotten that there are such things as good Christians and good Churches. Modern writers seem to have more respect for Homosexuality than for Christianity. (Note that I am not talking about society, only of the arts). Is it because Christians seem overly self-righteous? I don't know. Perhaps you can answer the question better.

Finally, my last word on 'Church and State'. Why did you settle on a pantheistic god for 'Cerebus'? Surely that concept is already out of date. Does anyone really feel indifferent to cancer because its just another aspect of God? If you were looking for something other than a Christian God, why didn't you choose Dualism instead? It gives more scope for action with conflicting sides in the argument. Then again, maybe I'm jumping the gun and you're going to reveal more about the religion of 'Cerebus' (the book not the character), maybe the Devil or a pantheon.

Anyway, I'd like to thank Ms McKiel for being so nice in sending a replacement copy of 'Church & State' and by air mail no less. Thanks a lot. Have a Merry Christmas!

Yours sincerely,

Ng Suat Tong
26 Westlake Avenue,
Singapore 2057

QUIET. Now how many of you heard what Ng said? You girls be quiet when I'm talking here. Wipe that smirk off your face, Diana, I'm being serious here. I want everyone to go back and read Ng's letter.

That was quite brilliant, Ng. Very, very good. Maybe some others around here could take a lesson. Does anyone have anything to add to what Ng said? Write it down and send it to me. A million times I say write it down and send it to me, does anyone listen? (Derek don't pour gravy on Mike. It make him smell funny).

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

Hi Hi this is me. I have just finished putting all my Church & State issues back in their special Cerebus drawer (#57 up) (excluding "Jaka's Story" which I picked up last week).

I will say that I have spent an issue here & there grumbling "I'm shelling out for this?" but I am a persistant type person and since Cerebus is the only comic I buy regularly and I love the art I never considered stopping my purchasing habits. And I'm real glad right now. When you're reading what seems to be randomly spaced and timed bits of anything you're almost bound to get impatient or have a less then favorite bit here and there. But when I went back and read the entire 4-1/2 inch stack, I was blown away by all kinds of things that don't come through in little blops. Your pacing is excellent, your dream sequences beautiful, you're pretty impressive on a large scale.

(Rave, rave)

Sure, I got a coupla complaints and questions but I'm too joyous right now to bother Maybe joyous is an odd reaction to a story that ends on a fairly tragic note? Well, you've brought me into an entire world with it's own delicateness and solidness and coming out of that created place, I still carry a sort of residue of all of its effects on me, and thus feel as though I have some contact and interaction with people and emotions and all that neat stuff.

See, I moved not too long ago and (no this is not going to be a long, weepy, personal letter) my recent contact with human beings I understand and vice-versa has been nil for several weeks. And Cerebus . . . well, I don't really know what to say except that it does affect me, and I will be sad when it's finished, just as I am sad everytime I come out of the worlds created by T H. White & Roger Zelazny & Sir A C. Doyle etc.

Major problem writing a letter like this to a person like you: you're just as likely to say "what a freak" as "this is a neat letter". You're awfully judgemental. But I don't care if you fuck porcupines as long as you keep writing and drawing Cerebus (ditto for Ger and his beautiful touch on all your work)

Yrs,

Katy Shaw
862 Wright Avenue,
Sihenactaly, NY., 12369

Katy, you're a wonderful girl. Your language is a little colourful, but that was a very nice . . . wasn't that a nice thing for Katy to say? Thank you, Katy dear.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave ! Hey.

How goes it? I'm just sitting here, studying for my exam in 20th Century China which is in an hour-and-a-half, listening to **Some Girls** by the Stones and I figured, what the hell, might as well write to Dave.

The bi-weeklies? Beautiful. No, seriously. I started collecting with #102, but bought all the back issue suntil #81. I figured, that way, I'd just have to buy **Cerebus, High Society and Church & State Vo. 1**. The problem was, I didn't know if I was going to be able to fork over the $25 a piece at one time. But now! Hey, what the hell? I think I'm going to get **C&S Vol. 1** but wait and buy the others through the bi-weeklies. Of course, if I suddenly inherit oodles of cash, I may buy both.

Another thing. The bi-weeklies are only costing me $1.50 every two weeks which I know is more expensive in the long run but is easier for me to dish out. Okay. Circulation for bi-weekly Dec. 2, 1988 was 35,000 and issue #115 (that came out that same week) was 26,000. I'm sure that the circulation for the new series will grow because new readers can easily get a hold of the older issues. However, circulation for the bi-weeklies will probably go down, as #1's usually sell better. What the hell. I swear you're a madman.

The note reprinted from **Swords**. Cool, no really. When you get past the bi-weekly for #25, are you going to write new ones? Bonus, no offense.

In the book collections (C & S Vol. 1, etc.), do you reprint all the "Notes from the President" and "Aardvark Comments"? How about covers? No offense, but this will affect whether I order them or not.

Did you get my last letter? It was pretty useless. I was in a shitty mood when I wrote it, so if you were going to print it, don't bother and print this one instead.

Sorry I didn't type this letter. Like I said, I'm studying for an exam, no offense. Speaking of exams, I believe that someday comic books will be studied at school/college/university, just as literature and films are studied today. No, really. People will start analyzing them and everything.

I better get going.

Catch ya later, Dave-buddy.

Jean-Guy Brin
313 Arthur Lane S.,
Ottawa, ON
K1S 4S6

No, Jean-Guy, the only things reprinted (no don't worry it was just a . . . my chest . . . a little gas, maybe. Where was I?) the only things reprinted in the large reprint volumes are the actual stories which for some people is obviously not good enough that I poured my blood and guts . . . OH EXCUSE ME. Excuse me I'm so sensitive about my life's work. Excuse me I think eleven years of my life is worth a few measly dollars. Maybe for you I should do thirty-two pages of letters? Hanh? Hanh? A glass of water . . . if it's not too much trouble.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave & Ger:

If words could express the plethora of emotions I experienced re-reading **Church & State** last night, perhaps I would make the effort. However, maybe a romp in the sack, case of Bud, and having your dog die would be a suitable prologue. Speaking of prologues, **Jaka's Story** looks to be some of your best stuff yet (she will have a reason to smile someday, won't she? maybe laugh? naaa. . .) Keep it up!

Re: Cerebus reading bashes/meadfests/diamondback marathons at Ivy League Schools:

Couldn't get through a week without one.

Your devoted pupil,

Evan Dobbins
56 Linnaean St., Box 66,
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA., 02138

P.S. You did tell Ludovica from Cornell about the inspiration I provided you in creating Bran Mak Muffin, didn't you? I mean, maybe she'd like to attend the 3rd annual Harvard Strip Diamondback tourney. You know, well, I mean, uhhh . . . well hey, can't blame a guy for trying.

Ohh. That's better. A little chest gas was all. I'm fine now. Ludovica? Ludovica dear, I printed his address for a reason. What did I always say about answering invitations? How many invitations have you gotten, hm? What have I told you to do? How do I know if he seems nice? It's a letter f'crying out loud, an eight and a half by eleven inch piece of paper. It seems to come from good stock. Write to him f'crying' out loud. Life's too short. How many times I gotta tell you kids? Life's too short.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

See, I guess first I said to her, "You're letting yourself be confined and limited by your stupid self-indulgent societal structures; you're not listening to what I'm saying. I'm only trying to give us what we once had. I know what's important, I know I'm right, and all the post-Social Darwinism logic in the world isn't going to change my mind. It's in the air on some days, if you know what to look for. We had it once, all of us, before herding and fences and real estate development, and we deserve it; I deserve it; you deserve it, and attitudes like yours are almost laughingly self-destructive." Then I realised how pretentious that sounded and said, "Fuck you. I'm right."

"Tupelo Honey," by Van Morrison. Cover of 114 reminded me of it. So'd the story. "You can't stop us, on the road to freedom. You can't stop us because our eyes can see. Men within sight. Men in granite. Knights in armor bent on chivalry." Is Jaka going to be a taming, poetic influence on Cerebus? Perhaps **Jaka's Story** will set the stage for a more microcosmic storyline, a more internalised one. Of course, token appearances by the bug are in order.

Also, I'd like to see Havok and Wolverine fall in love so that we can explore the possibilities of mutant homosexual relations.

I don't know what to do any more, Dave. Reading Kesey isn't helping.

Michael Robbins
3590 Clubheights Drive,
Colorado Springs, CO., 80906

Michael . . . Michael . . . Michael. Reading Kesey for help is like getting Hunter Thompson to fill your prescription.

★★★★★★★★★★

Now if everyone will just be quiet for a minute, I want to thank you all for being such good kids. Even you, Jean-Guy. I was just being a little sensitive there because I thought you were being critical about the reprint volumes. It's like I've told you kids a hundred times, I can please some of you all of the time and I can please all of you some of the time but I can't please all of you all of the time. But I want to say in all seriousness...if Derek and Rob don't mind taking the carrot sticks out of their noses...in all seriousness that I couldn't have come this far without all of you. There are so many times that the only thing that makes all the aggravation worthwhile is when one of you sees something in the story that no one else saw...a lot of times it's something I didn't put there and that's the best of all because it means you brought something of yourselves to it and a creator couldn't ask for a higher compliment.

Now I want everyone upstairs and ready for bed in fifteen minutes or there'll be trouble.

★★★★★★★★★★

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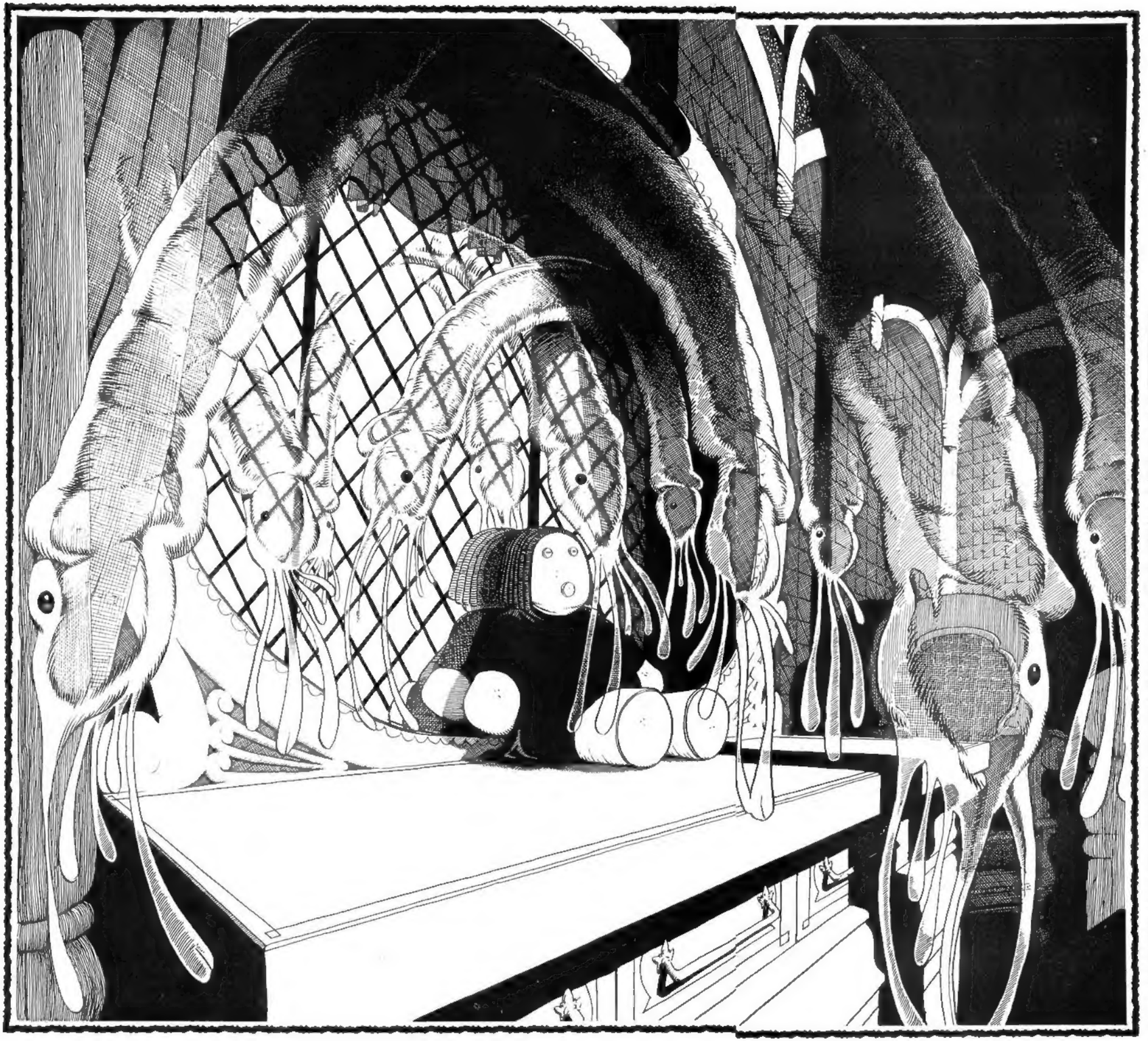
We haven't been anywhere and we haven't done anything, so we're down to this ... Me up at Doogies with Joanne, a waitress found near the scene of the crime.

Photo by Gerhard



BRAVE MISSY:
Solemn Missy.

She was resolute and true, this tiny black and white companion. Unmoving at her post, she observed the whole of Jaka's room; knew each crack and dent in the polished ceramic tile; knew their number and knew which were original and which had been replaced; knew, even, which had been replacements for replacements. She knew, as well, the presence of the insects.

They were those wavering horrors which inhabited the room and which Jaka had glimpsed infrequently all those dark, long nights alone. 'Insects' she had called them, though many of them were as tall as she and though they lacked legs, wings and appendages of any kind (save those viscous tendrils which hung from their misshapen heads; some twitching and curious like the trunks of elephants; others limp, prey to each capricious current and draught in the room). They resembled insects only in the carapace which enfolded them and their black pinpoint eyes, shiny and unblinking. Transparent, they were nearly invisible against the polished wood and antique tiling of Jaka's room. They drifted lazily, unconcerned and their progress unimpeded by curtain, dresser or doll. An eye would appear first. Then the area around it would begin to shimmer and distort and the 'insect' would drift for several seconds before gradually fading from view, ripples and all, only to be replaced in the next instant by one of its fellows. Whether they appeared, disappeared and reappeared in an endless cycle or if the fading was the death of them, Jaka was not certain.

Gradually the spectral dance drew closer and the things began to wheel smoothly about her bed like carnivores certain of their feast. One settled low over the antique quilt, its insubstantial tendrils vanishing beneath the stitched material causing a clammy sensation to inch its way across the back of Jaka's left hand. In her mind, clear and pure like a note from a sentry's trumpet, she heard the unmistakable voice of her doll.

"Don't move, Jaka. Just...don't move."

With the greatest difficulty Jaka choked off a scream welling in her throat. And she didn't move.